

Public Hearing on the County Executive's Proposed Fiscal Year Capital Budget and
Amendments to the Fiscal Year 2023-28 Capital Improvements Program (CIP),
and Fiscal Year 24 Operating Budget

before

The Honorable Evan Glass
Council President
Montgomery County Council

April 13, 2023

Testimony of Aaron Droller
Silver Spring, Maryland

Good evening Council President Glass and members of the Montgomery County Council. My name is Aaron Droller and I am a resident of Silver Spring. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on the County Executive's (CE) Proposed Fiscal Year ("FY") 2024 Budget. I testify today in opposition to the CE's proposed property tax increase.

A property tax increase of this magnitude is regressive and disproportionately harmful to middle and working-class residents that already struggle to afford housing in this county. This proposal is on top of sky-high property tax reassessments and punishing inflation. I know affordable housing is very important to this Council and this tax increase will make living in Montgomery County further out of reach for homeowners and renters alike. While this property tax increase is being sold to the public as money for our educators, it's clear from the budget being presented that this is mere pretext for irresponsible growth of county government across the board.

We all want our educators to be compensated fairly and competitively, but it's clear that this new revenue would be used to fund other MCPS initiatives, and not just teacher compensation. While there might be many worthy programs, the public should not be asked to pay additional taxes at this challenging time to fund any additional administrative bloat at MCPS.

The CE has put forward to this Council a fiscally irresponsible budget. I won't rehash what you already know, but using one time funds for ongoing expenses and creating structural deficits is a recipe for fiscal disaster. The growth in County government spending is simply not commensurate with our anemic population and economic growth. Given the macroeconomic

realities we face here, and with a projected recession on the horizon, the County government needs to tighten its belt just like residents do.

The Council can start by zeroing out all Covid era programs that were federally funded. Those programs, created under the unique conditions presented by the pandemic, were never intended to be backfilled by local dollars and made permanent. Further, given that there are already huge numbers of vacancies within the Executive, the Council should authorize no further growth in positions and eliminate vacancies that have gone unfilled for more than three years.

This Council needs to right size this government this year, or the decisions that you will be required to make in the future will be that much more painful. Please reject this regressive property tax increase. Thank you for your time and for your service to Montgomery County.